

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 139481

FOR AMB YOUNG FROM UNA

FOLLOWING REPEAT LAGOS 6717 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO CAPETOWN
MOSCOW, HAVANA 31 MAY 78

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L LAGOS 6717

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: XA, CU, UR, MPOL

SUBJECT: THE CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA; NIGERIAN RESERVATIONS

REF: A) LAGOS 6633; B) STATE 134913

1. THE FIRST PUBLIC INDICATIONS THAT NIGERIA'S POLICY MAKERS ARE
SOMEWHAT UNEASY ABOUT THE CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA (PARA 4 REFTEL)
CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA APPEAR IN A MAY 30 EDITORIAL
ENTITLED, "THE PAX FROM HAVANA" IN THE LEADING
GOVERNMENT-OWNED NEWSPAPER, THE DAILY TIMES (DT).
THE DT NOTES, INTER ALIA, THAT "THE CUBAN HEGEMONY
MAY, IN THE INTEREST OF AFRICAN INDEPENDENCE,
ULTIMATELY HAVE TO BE REJECTED IN THE SAME MANNER
AS THE PAX BRITTANICA OR GALLICA."

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2. THE EDITORIAL BEBINS BY NOTING THAT CUBAN IN-
VOLVEMENT IN AFRICA IS: "A UNIQUELY HISTRIC FACTOR
THAT HAS NOW BECOME PART OF THE POLITICAL SCENE ON
THE CONTINENT. CUBA, AN ISLAND REPUBLIC ON THE
CARIBBEAN SEA, IS ESSAYING TO ESTABLISH A HEGEMONY IN
AFRICA THAT THREATENS TO BE IMPERIAL IN SCOPE, IF

NOT IN ITS MOTIVATION. THE DILEMMA POSED BY CUBA IS RENDERED ALL THE MORE COMPLEX PRECISELY BY ITS UNIQUENESS. IT DOES NOT EVEN REMOTELY RESEMBLE ANYTHING THIS CONTINENT HAS KNOWN IN MODERN HISTORY. UNLIKE WHAT USED TO BE KNOWN AS THE PAX BRITTANICA, IT IS NOT IMPELLED BY ANY NEUROTIC SENSE OF A "CIVILIZING" MISSION. UNLIKE THE FRENCH, THE CUBANS HAVE DONE NOTHING SO FAR TO SUGGEST ANY PLANS TO EXPLOIT THEIR AFRICAN CLIENT STATES ECONOMICALLY."

3. WHILE RECOGNIZING THAT CUBANS AND AFRICANS SHARE A "TRAGIC" COLONIAL HISTORY AND ARE BOTH DRIVEN BY THE SAME "IDEOLOGICAL PASSION," THE DT ADDS: "YET IT IS THIS VERY UNIQUENESS THAT IS BOUND INCREASINGLY TO BECOME A SOURCE OF WORRY FOR AFRICA. THE CUBAN INTERVENTION IN ANGOLA AND ETHIOPIA WAS NECESSARY. IT HAD THE SUPPORT OF THE OAU (PERHAPS MORE UNANIMOUSLY IN ETHIOPIA THAN IN ANGOLA). WERE IT TO BE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE LIBERATION OF NAMIBIA AND ZIMBABWE, IT WOULD ALSO BE WELCOMED, AT LEAST BY THE MAJORITY OF AFRICAN STATES."

4. NEVERTHELESS, AS QUOTED ABOVE IN PARA 1, THE DT FEELS THAT THE "CUBAN HEGEMONY" MAY "ULTIMATELY HAVE TO BE REJECTED",. THE DT NOTES THAT CUBAN ACTIVITY IN AFRICA HAS NOT BEEN UNIVERSALLY WELCOMED

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BY ALL AFRICAN STATES AND OBSERVES: "ONLY MARXIST-ORIENTED GOVERNMENTS HAVE SO FAR EXTENDED INVITATIONS TO CUBA, JUST AS ONLY WESTERN-ORIENTED GOVERNMENTS HAVE SO FAR INVITED FRENCH INTERVENTION AND HELP. WE MAY DISCOVER QUALITATIVE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CUBA AND FRENCH INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA, BUT THE FACT THAT BOTH COUNTRIES ARE LIKELY TO AID ONLY FELLOW IDEOLOGICAL TRAVELLERS IS BOUND, IN THE END, TO CAUSE MORE DISUNITY AMONG AFRICAN STATES THAN IS JUSTIFIABLE."

5. WITH THE WEST AND THE CUBANS OPERATING ON THEIR OWN RESPECTIVE SELF-INTERESTS, THE DT SAYS: "WE CANNOT LIGHTLY DISMISS THE POSSIBILITY THAT AFRICA MAY SOME DAY BECOME A THEATRE IN WHICH THE WEST AND EAST CONTINUOUSLY TEST OUT THEIR LATEST MILITARY HARDWARE." FOR THE TIME BEING, HOWEVER, ACCORDING TO DT: "WE WOULD HAVE TO RECONCILE OURSELVES TO THE PRESENCE ON OUR CONTINENT OF FRENCH AND CUBAN AND OTHER FOREIGN TROOPS. THE FRENCH WILL PRESUMABLY REMAIN FOR AS LONG AS THE MORE CONSERVATIVE AFRICAN STATES WISH THEM TO. AND WE WILL CONTINUE TO RELY ON THE CUBANS SO LONG AS THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE GOES ON, OR THE MORE

RADICAL STATES REQUIRE THEIR PRESENCE."

6. THE DT CONCLUDES: ULTIMATELY, HOWEVER, A UNIFIED AFRICAN VOICE ON INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS WILL CONTINUE TO ELUDE US SO LONG AS WE ARE OBLIGED TO RELY ON FOREIGN POWERS FOR THE SECURITY OF AFRICAN STATES. PERHAPS CONTINENTAL UNITY AND INDEPENDENCE ARE FAR LESS IMPORTANT THAN THE SECURITY OF INDIVIDUAL GOVERNMENTS. PERHAPS THE DREAM OF A CONTINENT FREE OF ALL COLD WAR THREATS IS STILL A WORTHWHILE DREAM. WHICHEVER CHOICE WE MAKE, WE OUGHT AT LEAST TO BEGIN TO REFLECT ON THE OPTIONS OPEN TO US. AND NOW IS THE TIME TO BEGIN."

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7. COMMENT: IT IS ALWAYS DIFFICULT TO DETERMINE THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE DT REFLECTS VIEWS HELD WITHIN THE FMG. EDITOR PATRICK COLE WAS MOVED TO THE PAPER FROM THE CABINET OFFICE WHEN THE FMG TOOK OVER CONTROLLING INTEREST IN IT. REPORTEDLY, COLE WAS EXPECTED TO INJECT MORE DIRECTION INTO THE POLICY STANCES TAKEN BY THE DT AS WELL AS TO IMPROVE ITS GENERAL MANAGEMENT. HOWEVER, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE DT OPERATES WITH A STABLE OF EDITORIAL WRITERS WITH A VARIETY OF OPINIONS. THUS, A LINE IN TODAY'S EDITORIAL OFTEN IS ALTERED OR CONTRADICTED IN TOMORROW'S COMMENT. THAT SAID, HOWEVER, WE CAN STILL SAFELY CONCLUDE THAT THERE ARE PEOPLE IN THE FMG WHO HAVE RESERVATIONS ABOUT THE ROLE BEING PLAYED BY THE CUBANS IN AFRICA. THE TONE OF THOSE RESERVATIONS, AS REFLECTED IN THE DT COMMENT, IS THAT AT THE PRESENT TIME THE CUBAN ROLE IS POSITIVE AND NECESSARY; HOWEVER, IT IS IMAGINABLE, GIVEN THE FACT THAT CUBA IS HERE IN ITS OWN INTEREST, THAT THE CUBANS COULD BECOME AS OBJECTIONABLE AS EARLIER OUTSIDE FORCES AND WOULD THEREFORE HAVE TO BE REJECTED BY AFRICA.

8. TO THE EXTENT THAT THE DT EDITORIAL REFLECTS A POSITIVE EVALUATION OF THE CUBAN ROLE IN AFRICA AT THE PRESENT TIME AND, INDEED, IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE, I.E., ZIMBABWE AND NAMIBIA, IT REFLECTS OUR PERCEPTION OF NIGERIAN VIEWS AS REPORTED REF A. WE NOT THAT IN EVALUATING THE CUBAN PRESENCE, THE EDITORIAL STILL CONCLUDES "WE", I.E., THE PROGRESSIVE STATES, "WILL CONTINUE TO RELY ON THE CUBANS SO LONG AS THE LIBERATION STRUGGLE GOES ON." WE BELIEVE IT IS SIGNIFICANT, HOWEVER, THAT THERE IS ALSO SOME UNEASINESS ABOUT THE CUBAN PRESENCE.
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